

COVENTRY HIGH SCHOOL

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Testimony of Heather Casale Coventry High School

in opposition of

S.B. 1095 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Education Committee - March 1, 2023

Representative Currey, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, Vice Chair Leeper, Vice Chair Winfield and esteemed members of the Education Committee, my name is [NAME] and I am a [PROFESSION] in [NAME OF TOWN/DISTRICT] and [INCLUDE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP IF APPLICABLE]. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 1095 - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.

Senate Bill 1095 adds that (ii) that individuals who are school counselors, social workers, psychologists, aides or other staff members and have appropriate training and ongoing support may be assigned the duties of a school resource officer. Having this included in a state bill is concerning to me and my role as a school counselor. In my role it is so important for me to build rapport with my students. Having a relationship built on trust and offering my students a safe space is essential in the work I do. Having these qualities allows students to open up and feel comfortable sharing information, concerns and feelings that they may not share elsewhere. If we, as counselors, are to be placed into roles of discipline or security I feel this will create walls and barriers between school counselors and students. Many of our students already have built distrust toward authority or adult figures in our school buildings.

School resource officers in many cases are viewed as an extension of the police or law enforcement system. Although as counselors we collaborate with this entity of professionals we are very separate roles. The wording in this bill is not very clear, it does not include clear language around which duties would be appropriate for counselors. I am not certain what this bill refers to by "assigned the duties of a school resource officer." Currently my school does not have a SRO, I am fearful that this language would allow districts to use this bill as a reason to not employ an SRO if they were under the impression we as school counselors could perform the same tasks. With school violence on the rise I believe we should be implementing trained SRO Professionals, while allowing counselors to support all students with our counseling services focusing on social, emotional, academic and post secondary planning advice. In the wake of our recent pandemic much of my time is targeted at addressing student emotional needs and managing depression and anxiety.

I truly feel this added responsibility of carrying out duties of an SRO would be in direct conflict with my role and duties as a school counselor. We are already spread thin in our profession with little time and resources. I would ask that you modify this bill. School counselors should not be doing the work of the School Resource Officer as it is in direct conflict with the work and role of the school counselor. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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